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Washington, D.C. (March 26, 2020) National youth justice advocates and stakeholders were disheartened today to see that some of our most vulnerable youth are once again being overlooked by the federal government.

Today's stimulus legislation, which is meant to help address America's needs during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, does little to help young people who are in secure custody or for those who are at risk of coming into contact with the justice system.

We call on Congress and the Administration to pass an additional stimulus bill that addresses the needs of children and young people who are currently trapped in overcrowded jails and detention centers where social distancing simply is not possible. We owe it to our children to ensure that they have access to basic necessities: communication with their family through free phone calls or teleconferencing; access to remote-based educational opportunities; and access to life saving medical care and testing. States and localities also need access to preventive care for the majority of youth who are served in the community.

These services are costly and we were pleased to see \$100 million in additional juvenile justice funding including in the House's version of the bill.

"Federal juvenile justice programs have long been underfunded and additional money is essential to helping ensure that states can provide basic services and emergency responses to protect our young people during these trying times," said Naomi Smoot Evans, Executive Director of the Coalition for Juvenile Justice and Co-Chair of the Act4JJ Coalition.



We continue to urge courts and communities to let young people come home. We were pleased to see provisions in the CARES Act that would enable courts to hold most hearings remotely, with the exception of contested transfer hearings and adjudications. This will ensure that young people do not have to remain in detention unnecessarily and that their Due Process rights are not impinged as a result of this crisis.

We are concerned, however, that detention hearings are included on the list of proceedings that can take place remotely. This allows for protection and safe social distancing for all parties involved in the case, except for the young person. We need to protect our young people as well.

“We are happy that many states aren’t waiting for the federal government to act on behalf of children, and are developing emergency plans, increasing frequency of calls to families, and are beginning to work on getting children home,” said Marcy Mistrett, CEO of the Campaign for Youth Justice and Co-Chair of the Act 4 JJ Campaign, “but the federal government has an essential role in assisting states to keep children and staff safe, including those in secure settings; this needs to be a top priority in April.”